

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## BARRED BY THE POST OFFICE

by Ralph P. Smith

How, from time to time, the decisions of the Postmaster-General have been responsible for many changes in the appearance of many dime novels, is a subject on which a book could easily be written. I will try to hit the high spots in this article, particularly stressing the important decisions that changed the make up of nickel libraries.

When the Saturday Evening Post was selling for a nickel, and some issues weighed as much as two pounds, you may have wondered how such a small selling price was possible, when you found it cost you sixteen cents to mail an issue to a friend. The answer to that is found in the Postal Laws and Regulations, whereby, if a publisher complies with certain specifications, his publication was allowed to be entered as "second-class matter." Under this classification, the publisher mailed copies to subscribers in bulk. No stamps were used. The entire edition was weighed and the publisher paid, in those days, one cent a pound on the entire lot, and the postoffice distributed the copies to each subscriber. This small rate was available only to the publishers and their agents, and was only allowed them as long as they lived up to the rules.

These rules, briefly and not completely given here, were as follows:

(1) There must be an actual list of a number of paid up subscribers. (2) It must be issued with mechanical regularity, a specified date for each issue. (3) It must contain literature, news, or be devoted to some practical business or hobby. (4) It must comply

with the Postal Law as regards the illegality of mailing obscene matter; matter tending to incite to murder, arson, abortion, assassination, or other immoral practices.

It has been stated that to lose the privilege of mailing under second-class entry, will put a magazine out of business. Naturally, for example, the Post could not afford to pay sixteen cents to mail a five cent magazine; yet that is what would happen if they lost their second-class privilege. At the present time, Esquire, whose postage bill was over \$100,000, has been denied the use of second-class mailing, and it is said that it will cost them nearly \$400,000 as a result. Incidentally, the Postmaster-General ruled that the pictures in Esquire were obscene or indecent, in banning the magazine from second-class privileges. This is debatable, as there are always two sides to the "art" question; some people claiming a nude is indecent; others that a nude is simply a form of art, expressing beauty. This is not in my province. Sufficient to say that one man — the Postmaster General — has the power to decide.

Postmasters-General change with the same frequency as holders of all political positions. Sometimes depending on the President, and sometimes on a change of party in power, and sometimes from death or resignation. Every time a new one comes to the throne, it is his personal likes and dislikes, his beliefs and desires, that dictate to all publishers what can and cannot be printed in so far as he wishes to enforce or interpret the postal rules and regulations.

At the turn of the Century, we had the peculiar situation of books being



granted the second-class privilege. All a publisher had to do was issue a book in paper covers, issue one a week, or one a month, put the date on them, and they were considered magazines, as they were literature being issued regularly to a list of subscribers. The difference between a book and a magazine did not bother the Postmaster-General of those days. Even Medal Library, Magnet Library and countless others were issued under second-class privileges even up to 1907.

The legitimate book-publishers (cloth bound) found this cheap competition pretty stiff, as anyone could buy the classics for a dime or a quarter; in fact it cost so little to mail them, that sometimes 25 or more were given free with a 50c subscription to a farm paper. Books were later eliminated from the second-class privilege.

During President Arthur's term, there were three Postmasters-General. I do not know to which one can be attributed the clean-up campaign which bore fruit in 1883. The Wide Awake Library was in the 500's at this date, and had, for ten years, been printing all kinds of stories for boys. Besides the usual adventure type, comic, detective, business and science; they had published 66 stories featuring Jesse James, Claude Duval and other outlaw stories of a more or less gory nature. Obviously, thought the Postmaster General, these incite to murder, so must be banned; and banned they were. There was a great hue and cry about boys going out west to fight the Indians, but there was nothing in the postal laws against the killing of Indians, so no action was taken on this type, or pirate stories either, for the same reason.

Now, it was customary in those days to keep all back numbers in print. Nowadays, when an issue is sold out — that's the end of it. Not so in 1883. The publishers kept the full list of over 500 titles always in print. When an issue finally sold out, it was reprinted and kept in stock. Frank Tousey, publisher of Wide Awake Library, was faced with the alternative of printing his catalogue of Wide Awake Library, with these 66 numbers omitted, or else of substituting other titles which would get by the Postoffice Department. He chose the latter course, and filled in the 66 blank

spaces with stories of pass-the-censor type, most of which were Civil War stories. Thus, fellows, unless you have two copies of each of these 66 numbers, your file is not complete. I am appending a complete list of the banned numbers, and those used as substitutes.

The James Boys novels were good sellers, and under a less vigilant Postmaster-General were published at intervals by various library publishers at a later date. In fact in 1901 we had two weeklies dealing with James Boys exclusively, one by Tousey and the other by Street and Smith. In fact, when the motion picture, "Jesse James" appeared a few years ago, Street and Smith re-issued No. 1 of "Jesse James' Stories," with the original cover illustration complete with heading. The gap between issues was forty years!

After the novels were de-sanguinated, along about 1904, the publishers were careful that the stories they printed would not be nounced on by some zealous Postmaster-General; and lest they be summoned to a reading of the riot act; or be the recipient of a formal notice to cease and desist from sending such literature through the mails by second-class rates. But the nickel novel publishers' troubles were just beginning.

The very nature of the libraries was being questioned! In fact, it was being noised around that that stuff was not even literature! If it was not literature, then how could it be sent as second-class matter? Besides, it was a book, wasn't it? It contained a long complete novel, and so did a book. How come? How can that be sent as second-class matter? You send books by parcel post, Mr. Publisher, not by second-class.

Trying to beat the gun, Tousey, in the summer of 1907 decided to make his novels look more like a magazine than a book, so he added a short story and a couple of columns of jokes and interesting items to the usual full-length novel, which he set in slightly smaller type to allow him to print the novel in full, in a less number of pages.

Too late! The issues for August 21st were denied the mailing privilege, and it was not until Christmas Day 1907 that the Postoffice approved his novels, which must be now called magazines



to be accurate.

Everything went well during Postmaster-General Meyer's remaining tenure of office, but in 1909, President Taft shifted Meyer to Secretary of the Navy, and appointed Frank Hitchcock as the new Postmaster-General. Along about Christmas, 1910 something began to develop, and Tousey frantically shifted the make-up of his weeklies. He stopped the long novel at page 16 and continued it over into the back of the book. On page 17 appeared the editorial page, then came a short story. Pages 20 to 27 completed the novel, and the balance of the weekly contained a serial story. When the pages were uncut, the book naturally opened at page 17, and the first thing that struck your eye was the Editorial page — self evident that this magazine was not made up of just one long story. The last thing you read on page 32 was "This story to be continued in our next issue" — so it wasn't a complete book.

Evidently Tousey not only jumbled up the main story to prove his point with the Postoffice, but he jumbled up his readers too. They evidently got lost between pages 16 and 20 or were misled with the last page statement of "Continued in our next," for in a few weeks the cover carried the underlined statement: Complete in This Issue.

In February, 1911, advertisements appeared for the first time. No doubt this was done to make the weekly look even more like a magazine. Having done this, he moved the editorial page back, and ran the novel complete from start to finish, and soon removed the "Complete" notice.

Business boomed in a few weeks, and soon even the inside covers were full of advertisements. There were more advertisements than short stories and editorials. Gradually the main story was lengthened in space until it occupied 26 pages. Suddenly in Sep-

tember, 1911, the type became much smaller, and the story was completed in sixteen pages. Then followed news items, serials, short stories and advertisements. Now it really did resemble a magazine more than a novel, and no doubt the news items were printed to comply with the Postal regulations, one of which provisions was that a publication could be entered as second-class matter, if it was a news magazine. In fact, for some time afterward there was almost as much news in the novels, as there was stories.

Here you see the struggle the publishers had to hold their mailing privilege. In trying to satisfy the demands of the Postmaster-General, they published short stories, serials, started an editorial page, put in some advertisements, and finally ran many columns of news items. It would certainly seem that they were entitled to believe that they could no longer be considered as a book; and they did not have to prove that the reading matter was "literature," if they could prove that it was a newspaper or a newsmagazine.

Having lulled the suspicions of the Postoffice, little by little Tousey worked his way back to the 26 page main story, with only a trace of articles, stories and advertisements. In December appeared "And Other Stories," which followed the title of the novel thereafter on the cover.

Nevertheless in 1912 they lost the privilege again, which was not granted them again until Feb. 1913, and by this time there were six full pages of news items in each issue.

How the boys used to yell at the publishers, asking them to cut out all the news items, short stories and serials. How they used to ask, time and time again, for the return of the novel in its old form. All the publishers ignored them completely. What a pity they did not take the readers into their confidence, and show them what they were up against!

#### WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

##### ORIGINAL STORY:

- 4 Jack Sheppard
- 17 Dick Turpin
- 25 Gentleman George
- 26 Gentleman Geo. & His Pal
- 30 The King of Diamonds
- 31 The Four Knaves
- 33 Jonathan Wild

##### SUBSTITUTE STORY

- Joe Dodger, the Boy Ventriloquist
- The Marked Moccasin
- The Young Sergeant
- The Haunted Cave
- Infantry Dave
- The Eagle Bearer
- Cavalry Jack at Champion Hill



38 Ned Scarlet, Highwayman  
40 The Hangman of Newgate

54 Captain Hawke  
62 Captain Kyd  
64 Three-Finger Jack  
68 The Devil on Two Sticks  
70 The Highwayman's Fate  
72 The Assassin's Doom  
91 Claude Duval  
92 Claude and his Pal  
93 Duval and Dick  
94 Claude in a Fix  
95 Duval Betrayed  
96 On the Scaffold  
97 The Highwayman's Ride  
98 Clade Duval's Dead Shot  
99 Bonnie Black Bess

100 Claude in Jail  
101 Duval's Life Struggle  
102 Claude and the Nuns  
103 Duval in the Cloister  
104 Claude and the Lady  
105 Duval on Hand  
106 Claude and the Spy  
107 Duval in Chains  
108 Claude's Bride  
109 Duval on the Road  
110 Claude's Duel  
111 Duval and the Maiden  
112 Claude in the Toils  
113 Duval and the Casket  
114 Claude and his Chum  
115 Duval in Peril  
116 Claude at Bay  
117 Duval and Luke  
118 Death of Claude Duval  
203 One of the Boys  
211 The Burglers of New York  
212 Jerry O'Keefe's Crimes  
239 Behind the Bars  
240 The Boy Convict  
440 The Train Robbers (#440)  
451 Life of Billy the Kid  
457 James Boys as Guerrillas  
462 James Boys & the Vigilantes  
466 James Boys & the Ku Klux  
469 James Boys in California  
474 James Boys, Train Wreckers  
479 James Boys in Minnesota  
482 James Boys as Highwaymen  
488 James Boys' Longest Chase  
490 James Boys in Mexico  
492 James Boys at Crackerneck  
514 James Boys and Timberlake  
521 The James Boys In Court  
527 The James Boys Cave  
531 The James Boys Bank Robbers  
538 The James Boys Brides  
550 The James Boys Band

Sea-Dog Charlie  
Eely Jim, a Yankee Boy in the Re-  
bellion  
Forward; or, The March to Richmond  
Union Dick, the Yankee Spy  
The Potomoc Detective  
Mulligan's Boy — Comic  
Goldburn, the Girl Guerrilla  
Daring Davy, the Boy Rifleman  
Joe Ready  
Cavalry Jack at Murfreesboro  
A Sword for a Fortune  
Union Dick in the Rebel Camp  
Yankee Bob, the Young Scout  
Dick Mizzen  
Union Dick in the Seven Days Fight  
Cavalry Jack in the Swamps  
Daddy Durge, Old Man of the Dead  
House  
Union Dick and the Guerrillas  
Bull-Run Bob  
Battling for Glory  
The Young Recruit  
The Rival Spies  
The Boy Swordsman  
Ben Breeze  
Cavalry Jack; or, The Scout at Shiloh  
The Young Artilleryman  
Branded and Mad  
Toymast Tom  
Bayonet Bill  
Dick, the Lion Hunter  
Sherman's Drummer Boy  
Stars and Bars  
Charge for the Flag  
Red, White and Blue  
On Board the Merrimac  
Black Horse Tom  
Mountain Tom, the Rebel Raider  
Mustered Out at Fredericksburg  
Kilpatrick's Charge  
Twenty Miles Away  
Sword and Musket  
Cavalry Jack at Corinth  
Sir Rufas, the Rover  
The Wolf of the Waves  
Locomotive Bill  
The Unknown Scout  
The League of Blue  
"27" The House of Many Doors  
Young Lynx, the Amateur Detective  
The Phantom of the Waves  
The Twin Boy Scouts  
Sumter's Aid  
The Old Thirteen  
The Young Sharpshooters  
From Drummer Bob to General  
Barnum's Boy Ben  
The Drummer Boy Spy  
Owlface, the River Scourge  
Lazy Jake, the Boy Spy



**ADDENDA:**

Since compiling the above list, Ray Caldwell has supplied me some additional information. No. 36 Dick Clinton, the Masked Highwayman was withdrawn before the others; the substituted title being Little Mac, the Boy Engineer, this last title appearing even on the very early lists. Chips and Chin Chin originally ran for six numbers commencing with No. 183. The Stump series ran for six numbers commencing with No. 217. Shoo-Fly ran for four numbers commencing with No. 281. These three later were condensed into two numbers each, 183, 184-217, 218-281, 282. Other stories were substituted to fill in the blanks thus occurring. So, the collector will have to have 77 numbers duplicated, instead of 66.

**NOTICE**

The following property has been stolen from Charles M. Taylor, Market Street at 46, Northwest Corner, Phila., Pa.:

Tip Top Weekly Nos. 1 to 99 with the exception of Nos. 43-73 and 77. Bound in black buckram with the title and the numbers stamped in gold on the spine of the book. Spaces were left for the three missing numbers so that they could be inserted. All in choice condition. Also the first 100 numbers of Pluck & Luck in bound volumes. All the above had the covers bound in with the novels.

So if you fellows see, or hear of any of this stuff put on the market, write either to Mr. Taylor or the Roundup.

**NEWSY NEWS**

by Ralph F. Cummings

We all have our hobbies, and so does S. B. Condon. His hobby is growing spruce, pine and balsam fir trees. He has acres and acres of it, and I can even smell it way down here, it's so good.

Charlie Duprez, of Bellerose, L. I., N. Y., has had some pretty tough luck. Some one stole his camera and the things to go with it, and now he can't get another, unless he's got a priority. So if some one has a camera that they aren't using, get in touch

with Charlie for I know he'll appreciate it very much. His business is at a standstill now, until he gets another camera.

Frisco Bert Couch, 1427 Post St., San Francisco, Calif., is back in the collecting game again, so if you have any nice copies of Liberty Boys of 76, Beadles Dime Biographical Library, Beadles Famous Americans Series or most any kind of old timers, send him a list.

Ned Buntline wrote a serial story starting with chapter 1, entitled The Battle of Hate, or Hearts and Trumps, in The New York Mercury, Feb. 11, 1865, No. 1360.

The Great South and North Atlantic hurricane has passed, and what a beautiful day it is today, after it has passed out to sea. There were over 700 people lost in the one in 1938, but so far, I've heard of only 4.

They were prepared this time, and besides ye editor had his place boarded up in good shape, you'd think I was closed up for the season. Boy did it rain last night, of Sept. 14. I wonder where it all came from, and the old wind howled outside. Lucky I wasn't reading a thriller, or I might have been hiding under the bed instead. Thank God its over. We didn't get it so bad here as in 1938, as it passed out to sea.

Its been wonderful to have Bro. Gilbert Patten the original Frank and Dick Merriwell writer under the psedo of Burt L. Standish, write articles for the Roundup, and we are all very grateful to you Pal, and wish you happiness and the best of health the rest of your life, which we are all hoping to be a long, long time. God Bless You, Gil.

Notice Charlie Taylor's loss, seems your things or your money isn't safe any more, nor your life either. If you see or hear of any of his stuff, let him know right away. Thanks so much.

See the fine article Ralph Smith has in this No. and the lists too, the mystery is cleared up.

Has any one seen a new magazine called "Adventures of Buffalo Bill"? It sells for 15c a copy, and is about the size of Readers Digest, so Ralph Smith reports.

He says its reprint, (Abridged) from the cloth bound book of the same name, all fact, no fiction, had a couple of illustrations from the movie.



## WANTED

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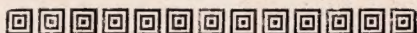
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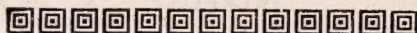
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52 Craigie Ave., Dundee, Scotland.

WANTED—Wild West Weekly, 1914-15 (war series) nos. 636 and 640. Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

## PARTIAL LIST OF H. H. BRO. MEMBERS FOR 1944

18. Chas. F. Westbrook, E. 1204 Illinois Ave., Spokane, Wash.
31. C. B. Hamilton, 10 Paris St., Norway, Maine.
40. P. C. Maroske, 4133 57th St., Woodside, L. I., New York.
50. J. P. Guinon, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark.
61. Benjamin F. Stetson, Box 214, Hanover, Mass.
79. Fred P. Fitzer, 41 Woodlawn Ave., Jersey City, N. J.
106. Clarence D. Lamb, P. O. Box 424, Salina, Kansas.
154. Lieut. Cmdr. F. C. Acker, U. S. N., Cozy Cottage, Clarks Lane, York Harbor, Maine.
190. James C. Morris, Gen. Del., Baltimore, Md. (An Old Timer)
191. Leverett S. Gleason, 114 E. 32nd St., New York, N. Y. (New member)
192. N. H. Stewart, Route No. 1, Scotts, Mich.
193. Alexander Baum, 620 Margaret St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

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FRANK READE LIBRARY

FRANK READE WEEKLY MAG.

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PLUCK & LUCK (Jack Wright)

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I will pay top prices for Tip Top in small or large lots. Can also use Beadle, Munro and Tousey novels; certain clothbound books by Rider Haggard, Gilbert Patten and Burt L. Standish; Merriwell stories in Medal Library, Merriwell Series, etc., and in Top Notch and other magazines.

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